Studies in Ephesians
Ephesians 6:1-8

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. [2] "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), [3] "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." [4] Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. [5] Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, [6] not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, [7] rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, [8] knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free.

<div align="right">—Ephesians 6:1-8 (ESV)</div>

Practical instructions…

v 1 – Children obey your parents in the Lord…
 relating to the Fifth Commandment
 "in the Lord" is important, not so much as a disclaimer, but as a reminder of the context—this is
  all a part of Christian living, life as God designed it to be lived
 For this is "right" – *dikaios*, for this is righteous, just. More than a guideline, it is ordained by
  God.
 "And he [Jesus] went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them."—
  Luke 2:51

 Many aspects of contemporary culture, entertainment, government, and education constitute a
  direct assault on this teaching (as well as on other Biblical teachings regarding the family):
  Children are under the authority of their parents. —*conversely*— Parents are in authority over
  their children.

v 2 – "Honor your father and mother…"
 Paul begins to quote the Fifth Commandment
 This goes beyond "Children obey your parents…"
 An establishment and affirmation of the family as a God-created institution

"This is the first commandment with a promise…"
 first – *protos*: first, foremost
 It is the *only* one of the Ten Commandments followed by a direct promise
 Paul statement highlights its uniqueness and first place before other instructions that would
  follow from God that would contain covenant promises

v 3 – "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."
 Honoring father and mother is the basis of a healthy, godly, and enduing society
 God has designed things this way—and—He is able to bless the family, which is a part of His
  design.

v 4 – "Fathers…"

        Still relating to the initial "submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ." (5:21)

        Do not *parorgizó*: exasperate, enrage   your children

                Showing consideration to children was not a requirement in NT times or culture.

        But *ektrephó*, more lit. nourish, nurture—to bring to maturity

        In the discipline and instruction of the Lord

                These are *positives*—teaching them how to follow Christ and what His teachings are

                Some punishment may be involved—but that is not the emphasis or even a main thing in mind

vv 5-8 – Instructions to Bondservants

        doulos—translated slave, servant, bondslave, bondservant

        In NT times, such servanthood was common—a *doulos* was owned by another person and had no ownership rights of his or her own

        The term is applied to Christians in the NT—particular to the apostles and other Christian leaders

        Slavery existed from as early as ca. 2000 BC (including Abraham, who had slaves). So by NT times, slavery had been a component of civilization, they would have said, "forever"!

        There were many types of slaves, different conditions for slaves, different regulations down through the centuries and through different civilizations, certainly to include Ancient Greece and, then, the Roman Empire.

        In NT times:

        Most slaves were captives from wars, or children of slaves, or had been sold into slavery as children by their parents.

        Some slaves were highly skilled (e.g. physicians).

        The NT writers were not led to attack the institution of slavery (nor did they defend it).

                Had they done so, the Christian movement would probably have become an "anti-slavery" movement.

                The Gospel message would have been eclipsed, and the "anti-slavery" movement would probably have been put down in short order.

        Christian slaves and slave owners were instructed in mutual consideration and submission as fellow servants of Christ—and were both reminded that, ultimately, they will be both judged and rewarded by Christ.

        Christian slaves were told to avail themselves of freedom if possible,

                Were you a bondservant when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.)—1 Corinthians 7:21

        …and the letter to Philemon is, in its entirely, an appeal on behalf of a slave, Onesimus, who, apparently, had run away and whom Paul was sending back.

        Two items that must be noted:

        The ending of slavery (where it has been ended) is a result of Christian influence, both acknowledged and unacknowledged.

        Even Roman slavery was never based on *race*! And, therefore, there was no teaching or philosophy that sought to justify the enslavement of a person based on his or her race. And the NT most definitely speaks to the hatred of one's brother. The racism that formed the basis of American slavery may have been worse, if one can make such comparisons, than the slavery itself.

The instructions to bondservants (slaves) was not a defense of slavery—slavery was accepted as a "given."

The instructions to Christian bondservants were in how to honor Christ within the circumstances in which they found themselves.

They remain as instructional for how those who work for others—which is most of us—should go about our work.

They are a reminder that we should not try to "leverage" a Christian relationship and do shoddy, lazy work.

And they are a reminder that whatever one's station in society, the Lord is aware of his hard work, and will repay all good done in His name, whether from an "important" person or an "unimportant" one.

In the new heaven and the new earth, those whom the Lord honors and appoints to much responsibility may come as a great surprise to many!